

Oral History of John Gilbert Bolton

I am the youngest of five brothers. My parents were John Gilbert Bolton and Mary McKowen. My father came from SLC, my mother was born in Naples, Utah.

LB: Do you know how they met?

JB: I was born in Bennett, Utah.

LB: Who were your brothers?

JB: There were five brothers of us – me being the youngest. My brothers was Charles Gilbert Bolton, John Raymond Bolton, Leland Garr Bolton and Byron McKowen Bolton.

LB: What was it like when you were growing up.

JB: We were born and raised before any of the automobiles were made. It was, we called it the horse-and-buggy days that you. When you went to Roosevelt to do your shopping and that, you had your, we called them “white-top” buggies.

We knew what work was – we done everything pretty much with a pitchfork or shovel. We milked cows, we had beef cattle, we had milk cows, we put up our hay – we done hay together with my Uncle Mervin and his two boys.

LB: They lived next door, right?

JB: They just lived north of us. The first car that we – my father got – was a Model A Ford. 1929 Model A Ford.

LB: How did you do your farming?

JB: It was long before tractors. We done everything with horse drawn – put up our hay with a derrick. Hay was pitched onto a slip – had two pitchers out in the field. It was raked up with a dump rake and the hay was mowed with a team of horses, everything was done with horses before tractors was even thought of.

LB: Tell of the time Doug was driving the tractor – did you have a tractor the time Doug hooked Uncle Charlie on the derrick?

JB: It got hooked on his belt and he lit right up on the hay stack. Oh dear – what was that? Did Doug – we changed that with pulling hay up with a horse and Doug was running the little 8M Ford Tractor? That was it – ya - there he was hanging up where the sling was just a laughing. We had a trip rope on it there that from the ground to the stacker – trippet (?) – so you would just pull that lariat rope and it would dump the hay up there. The hay would spread out pretty well where the stackers didn't have to do much with the pitch fork to make it look good on a hay stack. That was the only way they was then of hauling hay.

LB: Was it like a big mound of hay?

JB: Ya – we had slings on the slip and it was pulled by horses – had runners, wooden runners, and it had two pitchers, Raymond and my Uncle Mervin, they was the ones out in the hay field to throw these piles of hay that was raked with a dump-rake which you used with horses, and uh, that was the way everything was done in them days.

LB: What all did you raise?

JB: We had alfalfa hay – we had a little bit of grass hay but just a little bit. I remember Uncle Merv he always complained about hauling that grass hay. It was slick and it was hard to handle. It wasn't like alfalfa. Ya – he would moan and groan over that little bit. (laughs) Good thing it wasn't all grass hay. But we, like I say, we had milk cows, we had beef cattle and we had pigs, chickens, turkeys. We had everything, everything they was. We had pigeons – we'd – people knew we had pigeons and they wanted to get a start from us so they'd come and get a start from us and in no time at all them pigeons would come back home – we could sell them two or three times. (laughs) Not that we did, but it was comical, cuz they knew where home was, and they would come and they'd want the pigeons. We'd grow potatos, we'd have to dig them. We had to have two pits where we would store potatoes, people, a lot of time, would come to our place and want to buy a sack of potatoes from us, cuz we had two of them (what? – the pits?) Then finally the time come – well before we got the tractor we'd have to go down to Arnolds to get our grain chopped to feed the cattle with. We'd feed them alfalfa hay in a manger, they had their own manger and where we'd milk em by hand, there wasn't such a thing as milkers in them days. And horses, they had their stalls. They knew where they were supposed to go. If one horse got in the wrong stall they'd get bit from another horse that was – it was theirs and they didn't want anything in their place. It was a habit with them, ya – quite a thing. Oh, boy, it was – times, how they've changed. Yes, I remember our mother would be in the field a working and she would get the milk cows in and get them in their stalls, they had halters and you'd tie em up, cuz they'd stay there – bed em down for the night and bed em down so they'd be ready to go the next morning and milk em without going out in the field. It was – and she would – and when we still had the cows in and start milking and we would come in and help finish it up.

LB: So did you milk twice a day or just once?

JB: Twice – You milk morning and night. Ya, it was twice a day deal, and we had to feed, and of course they had young calves and you'd have to feed them on a bucket. The calf would stick its head in the bucket and learn to drink. you would have to teach them how to drink – they didn't understand it. You'd have to put your finger in their mouth and put their head in the bucket to get them to drink that milk. (laughs) And oh how times have changed. (laughs) I remember, I remember our pigeons would fly out in a big group, and there was these ole – we called em pigeon hawks - they was a fast – them there was such a thing as a bullet hawk – FAST – they could out fly a pigeon. Those pigeons would get in the air and those hawks would go out and chase em down and hit em some way with their –flop their wings or their feet. And they could knock em out of the air. And sometimes them pigeons could see a hawk up there, and we had a shed where we kept machinery, and those pigeons would come and fly underneath where the machinery was to protect themselves from them fast-flying hawks, cuz they was deadly on em. They could knock em right out of the air. It was something else. (laughs – oh boy).

LB: How did grandma cook and how you do referation?

JB: We huh, in the winter times we'd put up ice. My father and Uncle Mervin would go and my brothers would go down to the – we called it Daniel's crossing down on the Indian land and cut ice. Then we had a ice house, where we (part of the building where we separated our milk) and we had – we'd haul it in there and cover it with sawdust. Uncle Mervin would put coal dust on his – it was black. But we used regular sawdust and you could go in there and uncover the sawdust and get how much ice you'd want, you had an ax and things, they had tongs when you hauled it in the winter time to hook into em to slip into the wagon and so you could keep – it was a refrigeration – you could keep your milk cold and different things this way, but there was not electricity, we had no electricity. We had to do washing with an old washing machine you'd push the handle. Sit there and I used to push that ole handle, I'd get so sleepy, it was long washing clothes. But you had to have a fire to bake bread and use coal. Mother baked great big loaves cuz there was a lot of us to eat bread. Hang your clothes out on the clothes line. There wasn't such a thing as dryers in them days cuz there was no electricity. A lot a changes came. I remember our turkeys went over to Uncle Mervins over north of us, and we had the Model A Ford sittin under the trees and they flew and hit the windshield and knocked the windshield out. (laughs) They did – they knocked the windshield right out of that Model A Ford. (laughs – oh, dear) quite the deal.

LB: Uncle Merv and grandpa were brothers and grandma, your mother Mary, and Nellie . .

JB: Ya, They were sisters – they had two sisters, Aunt Katie Mitchell and Aunt Gertrude Mitchell. They were sisters. Aunt Lizzy was a Colton, and they all lived in the Bennett area. They all didn't go very far from where they were raised.

LB: Who were Uncle Merv and Aunt Nelli's children?

JB: Uncle Merv and Aunt Nellie's children was Della, the oldest, and then there was Marie, and then Gerald, he was right after Marie, then there was Arthur. He later had heart troubles and he passed away. And they had a little brother, Orlan, and he passed away at a very young age. But that was, and they lived just north of us.

LB: Was that all the kids there was?

JB Oh, ya, then there was Bertha, she was the youngest. They all ended up in the Salt Lake area. Ya.

LB: Where did you go to school at?

JB: We had our own school in Bennett, to begin with. We had our school there and our church house was just east of the school house and huh, father was Bishop there for seventeen years. But huh, like I say, we had our school and later they took our Bennett school away from us and took us to Ballard for the elementary, course, then that was before Alterrah was even had any school and Charlie went over and stayed with the Weeks', where we was related to them and he would stay there in Vernal and went to school in Vernal and then on weekends he'd come back – I don't know how he got back- back and forth now. But he'd come back and be home for Saturday and Sunday and back over there. Don Weeks was our relations so he'd stay there with him.

LB: What grades were in the Bennett School? Was it all grades?

JB: All the grades was there – was it up to the eighth grade? One through – they didn't know what kindergarten was in them days – but they went thru, clear up to the eighth grade.

LB: And you rode your horses to school?

JB: Three of em ridden, gett'n to school, there wasn't no buses in them days. And uh, three of us, three brothers, huh, Byron, Garr and myself. I rode – two of us on the – two of us in the saddle, I'd ride in the saddle with one of my brothers and the third one on the horse rode on the back where there's no pad nor nothing, just on the bare back, back there on the hips. An then two brothers, Charlie and Raymond was on one horse by themselves, Oh yes. We had, before I started to school, why, we got a horse from Winford Long, ole Whity, we called him, and clumsy as he could be. They just crossed the Whiterocks road and ole Whity stumbled over a sagebrush and fell down and broke Charlie's arm. (oh – what an animal – laughs) We had ole Ginger, he was an ole raw-boned horse, he was kinda a clumsy, but he didn't fall down and break anybody's arm. (laughs) It was quite a life.

LB: How many school teachers – was there just one school teacher?

JB: No they had a teacher for each grade. Ya, all - from first grade on up to eighth.